

الْبَابُ الثَّانِي

كَوْنُ رَحْمَتِهِ ﷺ لِجَمِيعِ الْعَالَمِينَ

CHAPTER TWO

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ IS MERCY TO ALL
THE WORLDS

ALLAH ﷻ MADE HIS EXALTED MESSENGER MERCY TO THE WORLDS. Allah did not give any of the creation that title, which proves the immense status and august rank of the Prophet ﷺ. Allah said,

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

«And, (O Esteemed Messenger,) We have not sent you but as a mercy for all the worlds.»⁶⁷

Allah ﷻ made His Exalted Messenger mercy both generally and specifically. There are many aspects to this Qur'ānic verse that indicate the Prophet's lofty and transcendent station, and show that no one in creation can even dream of coming near his status. He surpasses them all, and this should come as no surprise, since Allah made him Mercy to all the Worlds, and not just to human world. It is impossible to fully detail all the facets of the Prophet's mercy. The ensuing pages offer a few glimpses.

2.1 BENEFITS EXTRACTED FROM THE QUR'ĀNIC VERSE

There are many benefits that we can extrapolate and understand from the aforementioned sacred verse.

1. FIRSTLY, Allah ﷻ mentioned the word “mercy” in an indefinite form to indicate its comprehensiveness and generality; it is general in its scope and subsumes all particulars and includes all the Creation. Further, this indefinite word occurs after a negation, and, as the principle states, “the indefinite noun that occurs in the context of negation indicates complete generality.”
2. SECONDLY, this negation—“not”—occurs before the restriction “but”; and restriction that occurs after a negation indicates complete encompassment, which means that the thing mentioned after the

⁶⁷ Qur'ān 21:107.

negation encompasses everything mentioned after the restriction. Essentially this means that the Prophet's mercy ﷺ encompasses every recipient of his message.

3. THIRDLY, this mercy is a gift from Allah ﷻ and is not the product of man. Man has no say in the matter, and the Prophet ﷺ did not obtain it through works of spiritual enterprise and ventures. It is but a gift from Allah ﷻ that He granted to His beloved Messenger ﷺ. Allah ﷻ said,

﴿فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ﴾

﴿(O My Esteemed Beloved!) What a mercy of Allah that you are lenient with them!﴾⁶⁸

This holy verse points to the Prophet's gentleness, which is but from Allah's mercy that He bestowed upon His venerable Messenger and his people after him, those whose hearts are made gentle through faith in the Messenger ﷺ and through following what he ordered and abstaining from what he forbade.

Qatāda ؓ said, "This means that it is because of Allah's mercy that you are lenient with them."⁶⁹ Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī ؓ said, "This is the character of Allah's Messenger ﷺ with which Allah sent him."⁷⁰ In essence, it means that Allah ﷻ placed mercy in His Beloved and Chosen One before his physical creation.

4. FOURTHLY, this mercy that Allah's Messenger ﷺ is described with is not the sole reserve of a single person or a group or people. This mercy operates at all the planes of existence. It is mercy in the religion and mercy in the world. It is the cause of felicity in this life and the Next,⁷¹ and it results in uprightness in one's life here and

⁶⁸ Qur'ān 3:159.

⁶⁹ Ibn Abī Ḥātim Rāzī, *Tafsīr Qur'ān al-‘aẓīm*, 3:800.

⁷⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-‘aẓīm*, 2:148.

⁷¹ See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 22:199–200; •al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa al-‘uyūn*, 3:475–476; •Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 17:106; •al-Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-tanzīl*, 3:271–272; •al-Biqā‘ī, *Nazām al-durar fī tanāsūb al-āyāt wa al-suwar*, 5: 508–509; •Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, 5:687.

the Hereafter. It brings rewards for those who obey and remove the torment from those who disobey and are sullied. It is a gift that spurs one to obey Allah ﷻ. The Prophet's mercy is for everything in the world.

5. FIFTHLY, the Prophet's mercy ﷺ encompasses the entire Creation: humans and jinn, believers and disbelievers, young and old, good and bad, righteous and wicked, lofty and lowly, open and hidden, and so on. That is because the exception mentioned in this verse comes without any of the various conditions, stipulations and causes. In other words, this verse means "We have not sent you for any reason whatsoever except Our vast mercy." Imam al-Ṭabarī said, "According to me, the closer of the two views to what is correct is the view reported from Ibn 'Abbās ؓ:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَرْسَلَ نَبِيَّهٖ مُحَمَّدًا ﷺ رَحْمَةً لِّجَمِيعِ الْعَالَمِ؛ مُؤْمِنِيهِمْ وَكَافِرِيهِمْ.
فَأَمَّا مُؤْمِنُهُمْ: فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَاهُ بِهِ وَأَدْخَلَهُ بِالْإِيمَانِ بِهِ وَبِالْعَمَلِ بِمَا جَاءَ مِنْ
عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْجَنَّةَ. وَأَمَّا كَافِرُهُمْ: فَإِنَّهُ دَفَعَ بِهِ عَنْهُ عَاجِلَ الْبَلَاءِ الَّذِي كَانَ
يَنْزِلُ بِالْأُمَمِ الْمُكَذِّبَةِ رُسُلَهَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ.

Indeed, Allah sent His Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as mercy to the whole world, both its believers and disbelievers. As for the believers, it is because Allah guided them by means of the Prophet and caused them—through faith in him and the performance of good works—to enter Paradise. As for the disbelievers, it is because they have been spared from swift affliction by virtue of the Prophet, whereas the previous nations would suffer after they belied their Messengers.⁷²

This statement applies to those who believe and those who do not believe. For those who believe, the Prophet ﷺ is mercy in this life and the Next, and for those who do not believe, the Prophet ﷺ is mercy in this life alone, as by means of him, the torment is delayed and they are not subjected to disfigurement and complete annihilation that befell the bygone people.

⁷² Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 17:106.

Imam al-Biqā'ī said,

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ﴾ أَيُّ بَعْظَمَتِنَا الْعَامَّةَ عَلَى حَالَةٍ مِنَ الْأَحْوَالِ، ﴿إِلَّا﴾ عَلَى حَالٍ كَوْنِكَ ﴿رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾ كُلِّهِمْ. أَهْلُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَأَهْلُ الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَغَيْرِهِمْ، طَائِعِيهِمْ بِالتَّوَابِ، وَعَاصِيهِمْ بِتَأْخِيرِ الْعِقَابِ.

Allah said, *«And We have not sent you»*, in other words, by Our Magnificence, We have not sent you in any way, shape or form, *«but»* as a *«Mercy for all the Worlds»*: the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, the jinn, humans and others. For the obedient, there is reward, and for the disobedient, their punishment is delayed.⁷³

Ibn Kathīr said:

وَقَوْلُهُ: ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾: يُخْبِرُ تَعَالَى أَنَّ اللَّهَ جَعَلَ مُحَمَّدًا ﷺ رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ، أَيُّ: أَرْسَلَهُ رَحْمَةً لَهُمْ كُلِّهِمْ، فَمَنْ قَبِلَ هَذِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ وَشَكَرَ هَذِهِ النُّعْمَةَ، سَعِدَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ، وَمَنْ رَدَّهَا وَجَحَدَهَا خَسِرَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ.

Allah said, *«And We have not sent you but as a Mercy for all the Worlds»*. In this verse, Allah ﷻ informs that He made Muhammad ﷺ Mercy for the worlds. In other words, He sent him as mercy to everyone; so whoever accepts this mercy and is grateful for this bounty will achieve felicity in this life and the Next, whereas those who reject and refuse this will lose both in this life and the Next.⁷⁴

Now, the mercy mentioned in Allah's words *«And We have not sent you but as a Mercy for all the Worlds»* is either in the accusative form as an object of reason (*maf'ūl lahū*)—in other words, for the sake of mercy—or it is in the accusative form as a circumstantial qualifier

⁷³ Al-Biqā'ī, *Nazām al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, 5:508–509.

⁷⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿazīm*, 3:201.

(*ḥāl*), a hyperbolic way of saying that Allah made the Prophet the quintessence of mercy. In a third possible interpretation, there is an ascription that is omitted, namely the word “possessor,” as is “the possessor of mercy” or “the merciful”.⁷⁵

6. SIXTHLY, the expression “Worlds” encompasses the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, such as oceans and plains, mountains and valleys, plants and fruits, rivers and trees, and wind, birds, water, animals, humans, jinn, inanimate objects, flowing things, moving objects, still objects, articulate and inarticulate. This mercy also extends to climate and inner earth, the visible and the invisible, and all the contents of the heavens and the earth. All of these things and more are encompassed by the word ﴿Worlds﴾, and this is its general meaning.

This is further proven by the statement of Allah ﷻ to Mūsā and Hārūn ؑ,

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةً
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ﴾ ١٥ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ
الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ ١٦ يَسْتَعْجِلُ
بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهَا
الْحَقُّ ١٧ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُمَارُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ ١٨ اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ
بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ ١٩ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ
الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ ٢٠ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا
لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ ٢١ أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ
يَأْذَنْ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
أَلِيمٌ ٢٢ تَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَهُمْ وَقَعُ بِهِمْ ٢٣ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَٰلِكَ

⁷⁵ See •al-Nuḥās, *I'rāb al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, 2:386.

هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٣٠﴾ ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهَ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَمَن يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿٣١﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ أَفْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَإِن يَشِئِ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتٍ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٣٢﴾

﴿And those who dispute about (the Dīn [Religion] of) Allah after it has been accepted, their discussion and contention is false in the sight of their Lord. And upon them is the wrath (of Allah) and for them is a severe torment. Allah is He Who has revealed the Book with the truth and (also sent down) the balance (of equity and justice). And who has put you on alert—perhaps the Last Hour is near? They who do not put (any) belief in it seek to hasten this (Hour), and those who believe fear it and know that its coming is the truth. Beware! Those who argue about the Hour are in extreme error. Allah is Most Bountiful and Benevolent towards His servants. He bestows His sustenance and bounty upon whom He wills. And He is Most Strong, Almighty. He who seeks the harvest of the Hereafter, We grant him further increase in his harvest. And he who desires the harvest of this world, We give him some of it, but in the Hereafter there does not remain any share for him. Have they any (such) partners that have established for them a path of dīn (religion) about which Allah has not given any command? And had the command of judgment not (gone forth) already, the matter between them would have been settled. And surely, there is a painful torment for the wrongdoers. You will see the wrongdoers fearing those (deeds) that they have earned. And that (torment) is bound to befall them. And they who believe and persist in pious deeds will be in the Gardens of Paradise. There will be for them with their Lord (all those blessings) which they will long for. That is indeed a great bounty. That

*is the (award) of which Allah gives the good news to those servants who believe and do pious works persistently. Say: "I do not ask for any recompense for this (preaching the faith in Messengership), but (seek) love for (my) kindred (and Allah's nearness)." And whoever earns good, We shall increase for him the reward in the Hereafter. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Appreciative. Do they say that this (Messenger [blessings and peace be upon him]) has invented a lie against Allah? So if Allah wills, He may set a seal (of patience and steadfastness) on your holy heart (so that their absurd talk may not hurt you). And Allah eliminates falsehood and maintains the truth established by His Words. Surely, He knows best the secrets of the breasts.*⁷⁶

Prophet Mūsā's explanation about the meaning of «Lord of the Worlds» proves that the word «Worlds» [‘ālamīn] includes all the Creation. Putting another way, it can be said: Mūsā's explanation proves that the word «Worlds» indicates everything besides Allah ﷻ and His names and attributes. For this reason, the phrase "Lord of the Worlds" is repeated frequently in the Holy Qur'ān; in fact, it has been mentioned over forty times.

Allah ﷻ is the Lord of all creation, as He said, «Lord of the Worlds», and He made His elect and beloved Prophet ﷺ mercy to them all, as He said, «Mercy to the Worlds». So for everyone whose Lord is Allah, Allah has made His Prophet mercy for him.

7. SEVENTHLY, Allah ﷻ made the sending transitive with the letter *lām* when He said «Mercy to the Worlds» [rahmatan lil al-‘ālamīn], and He did not use the letter *bā'* [bil al-‘ālamīn]; what is the secret behind this? For starters, one of the meanings of the particle *lām*—[al]—as the grammarians state—indicates ownership or possession, sometimes expressed as *ikhtiṣāṣ* (unique possession) and sometimes expressed as *istiḥqāq* (rightful ownership). So it is as if Allah ﷻ has made His noble Prophet ﷺ mercy, and, in turn, made it the possession of the worlds that is uniquely theirs and their rightful ownership. This all shows the encompassing nature of this mercy for the worlds. It

⁷⁶ Qur'ān 42:16-24.

is affirmed and fixed like the possessions of an owner, even if the intent behind the verse is to affirm the benefit of mercy that is enjoyed by all the Creation. It is, therefore, comprehensive, inclusive and encompassing of all the Creation.

On the other hand, the particle *bā'* [bil]—does not indicate this meaning. One of its meanings—as the grammarians state—indicates “some”. So if the particle *bā'* was used, the verse would mean that his mercy would apply to some of the worlds—the believers only—and not others. There is no doubt, however, that this mercy is inclusive of everyone and everything, and that is compatible with the vast mercy of Allah ﷻ and His generosity and munificence.⁷⁷

Another proof that strengthens the former view is the fact that this mercy is gifted by Allah ﷻ to His Creation, for the Prophet ﷺ said, “I am mercy.”⁷⁸ The word gift [*hadiya*] can mean to take possession of someone without recompense, or it could mean to take possession of a benefit from someone else. The former meaning is not reported, so all that remains is the latter: the possession of benefits, and that is the mercy to the creation.

8. EIGHTHLY, there is a secret behind the plural form “Worlds”. We notice that Allah ﷻ used the word “Worlds” which is the plural form for the word “world” [*ālam*=*ālamīn*]. The plural for the word *‘ālam* can be expressed in two ways: as *‘awālim*, which is a plural form for inanimate objects and *‘ālamīn*, which is a plural denoting less in number, but which is used for animate beings. So the question here is, why did Allah ﷻ mention the plural denoting less, *‘ālamīn*, and not the plural denoting more, *‘awālim*, though most of what is contained in the universe is inanimate?

The answer is that Allah ﷻ mentions the form *‘ālamīn* to give predominance to the nobility of humanity over others, even if—as we know—inanimate objects, from the heavens, stars, earths and mountains to rivers, oceans, trees and animals are greater in number

⁷⁷ See Ibn Hishām, *Awḍaḥ al-masālik ilā Alfīya Ibn Mālik* (3:29–40) for further details on the meanings of the *lām* and *bā'* governing particles. He explains that each of them have twelve meanings.

⁷⁸ This was reported by al-Ḥakīm in *al-Mustadrak* (1:91 §100) who declared it authentic.

than animate beings. Allah is the Lord of them all. It seems that this is because humans, angels, and jinn are among them, and there are Messengers among humans and the leaders of the angels, such as Jibrīl and Mikā'il, among the angels, and so on. Alternatively, the word 'ālamīn could refer to the angels, jinn and humans to the exclusion of the rest.⁷⁹ This is why the word 'awālim is not found in the Holy Qur'ān.

9. NINTHLY, this mercy is comprehensive in its call, expansive in its branches, general in its linkages, manifest in its appearance, singular in its source—yet with all this, it is connected with its Lord who created it and sent it. This is why Allah ﷻ said,

﴿فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ﴾

﴿It is from Allah's mercy that you dealt gently with them﴾⁸⁰

And ﴿And We did not send you...﴾. As for its comprehensiveness and inclusiveness, it is clear from Allah's words ﴿...to the Worlds﴾.

If this is the case as it pertains to its source, linkage, and appearance, and its inclusiveness and comprehensiveness, what do you say about its connection to its Lord, Exalted is He? This is clarifying the following verse:

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۖ فَهَلْ أَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

﴿Say: 'This is what is revealed to me that your God is One God (only). Do you then accept Islam?'﴾⁸¹

Furthermore, what is its connection to the Creation to whom it was sent? This is also clarified by the same verse, ﴿Mercy for all the Worlds﴾.

This is why mercy was manifest in the exalted person of the holy Prophet ﷺ who has no likeness among humanity. In his presence, all distinctions were effaced and he did not discriminate on the basis of colour, ethnicity, nationality, tribe or another distinction. He linked

⁷⁹ See al-Fayrūzabādī, *Baṣā'ir dhawī al-tamyīz fī laṭā'if al-kitāb al-ʿazīz*, 4:95.

⁸⁰ Qur'ān 3:159.

⁸¹ Ibid., 21:108.

people with a single link: that of faith in Allah ﷻ. The Messenger's personality was one of complete and perfect mercy. Allah ﷻ chose him and distinguished him from all His creation and singled him out with unique and unrivalled qualities. It is he who brought close Bilāl the Abyssinian, Salmān the Persian, Şuhayb the Roman, and others from the freed bondsmen of Abū Lahab, Abū Jahl and the like.

10. TENTHLY, Allah ﷻ made His beloved Messenger ﷺ an apportioner of what Allah gives. Mu'āwiya ؓ said that he heard Allah's Messenger ﷺ say,

مَنْ يُرِذَ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهُهُ فِي الدِّينِ؛ وَاللَّهُ الْمُعْطِي وَأَنَا الْقَاسِمُ.

Whomever Allah wishes good, He gives him deep understanding of the religion. And Allah is the Giver and I am the apportioner.⁸²

Agreed upon.

Take notice of the fact that the Prophet's phrase "And Allah is the Giver and I am the apportioner" might be expressed for numerous reasons. Here it is regarding seeking deep knowledge of the religion, but in the hadith of Jābir ؓ—found in al-Bukhārī and Muslim—it concerns the naming of a young boy, while in the hadith of Abū Hurayra ؓ in al-Bukhārī it concerns wealth and spoils of war.

In reality, it is Allah Who is the Giver and the Compassionate, and it is the Prophet ﷺ who shows compassion and apportions, giving whomever he is ordered to give. According to Abū Hurayra ؓ, the Prophet ﷺ said,

إِنَّمَا أَنَا قَاسِمٌ، أَصْعُ حَيْثُ أُمِرْتُ.

I am but the apportioner, placing it wherever I am commanded.⁸³ Reported by al-Bukhārī.

11. ELEVENTH, there is an intimate link between the Prophet ﷺ

⁸² Set forth by •al-Bukhārī in *al-Şahīḥ*: Bk.: *al-ʿIlm* [The Knowledge], Ch.: "Whomever Allah Wishes Good For, He Gives Him Deep Knowledge of the Religion," 3:1134 §2948.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3:1134 §2949.

being mercy from Allah ﷻ and his possessing a sublime character and being an excellent exemplar. Through this, Allah has granted him every virtue and exalted station.

12. TWELFTH, the goodly treatment that the Prophet ﷺ afforded the arrogant disbelievers and obstinate opponents of time, and his quality of complete mercy and excellent character, left an indelible effect in them, and made them submit to his authority unconsciously, leading all the surrounding tribes to embrace the faith.